DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 084 544 CS 200 839

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TITLE A Report on Elementary School Curriculum Language Arts Component, Project PRIMES: Progress Research in Meeting Elementary Standards, ESEA, Title III 1972-73.
INSTITUTION Columbus Public Schools, Ohio. Dept. of Evaluation, Research, and Planning.
PUB DATE Sep 73
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); Curriculum Evaluation; *Curriculum Research; *Elementary Grades; Evaluation; *Evaluation Criteria; *Language Arts; Listening; Oral Communication; *Program Evaluation; Spelling; Writing

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to develop positive attitudes and knowledge of evaluation philosophy and techniques at the local building level. A set of procedures and instruments were devised through the efforts of the project staff to train participants to plan and carry out activities appropriate for assessing the particular education needs in their schools. Evaluation activities were implemented by a building committee formed in each elementary school in conjunction with the project staff. From the various content fields the school committee composed of principal, teachers, and lay persons selected a focus for evaluation. Language arts was chosen by 13 of 151 participating schools. A language arts self-evaluation instrument was provided as a basis for the committee to plan the evaluation. The instrument was designed to gain information in the areas of written communication, oral expression, spelling, and listening skills. Each school responded to the items on all sections according to the extent to which the condition should exist and the extent to which it does exist in the school. In general, schools participating in the language arts self-evaluation judged themselves to be implementing a large percentage of the items that were valued highly. (WR)

ED 084544

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A Report on Elementary School Curriculum

Language Arts Component

Project PRIMES:
Progress Research in Meeting
Elementary Standards
ESEA, Title III
1972-73

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September, 1973

CS 200 839

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Section I
Specifications of the Project

A. Statement of Purpose

Project PRIMES provided assisting services to the public and parochial schools in Columbus attempting to fulfill mandated evaluation requirements for meeting Ohio Standards for Elementary Schools.

The purpose of the project was to develop positive attitudes and knowledge of evaluation philosophy and techniques at the local building level. A set of procedures and instruments were devised through the efforts of the project staff to train participants to plan and carry out activities appropriate for assessing the particular educational needs in their schools.

B. Procedures

Evaluation activities were implemented by a building committee formed in each elementary school in conjunction with project staff. During the year 1972-73 the curriculum component of school operation was the state mandated area chosen for assessment. From the various content fields the school committee composed of principal, teachers, and lay persons selected a focus for evaluation. Language arts was chosen by 13 of the 151 participating schools.

C. Instrumentation

The procedures planned for project implementation determined to some extent the amount of staff assistance to individual schools. A single briefing to designate procedures and review the instrument was required of principals who chose to carry out evaluation activities on their own. A second approach was to provide evaluation planning assistance to the building committee after the session with the principal. Finally, a procedure which assured the assistance of the project staff throughout the total schedule of evaluation activities was possible. Of the 13 schools choosing language arts, five principals chose to conduct the evaluation themselves, two requested assistance from project personnel in planning the evaluation, and six principals desired the assistance of project personnel throughout all of the evaluation activities.

A language arts self-evaluation instrument was provided as a basis for the committee to plan the evaluation. The instrument was composed of four sections designed to gain information in the areas of written communication, oral expression, spelling, and listening skills. Each school responded to the items on all sections according to two separate criteria; the extent to which the condition should exist (value placed on condition) and the extent to which it does exist in the school.

Section II
Results

The information gathered was used by the individual schools for improvement planning. This report is concerned with the accumulated data from all involved schools to present a general indication of the language arts programs.

The self-evaluation instrument was administered to principals, teachers, and parents of participating schools to reach a concensus opinion regarding the four areas of inquiry in the language arts curriculum.

Information is presented separately for each language arts section.

A. Written Communication

This section was involved with determining the existence of and/or the value placed upon activities, methods, and materials to aid in the development of skills pertaining to written communication. None of the conditions expressed in the items of this section exists to the degree that it should according to a concensus opinion of respondents. A majority of responses falling in the two highest dimensions of the five point scale (4 or 5) indicated a high degree of the condition expressed in the item. Table 1 illustrates those items that are valued to a high degree in the language arts curriculum and also exist to a high degree. A total of 13 schools responded on each section of the instrument.

Understanding compound and complex sentences was the only item judged to be of high value but which was not present to a high degree in a majority of the schools. Motivation for creativity in writing diaries was the only item considered to have a low degree[1] of value and was present to a low degree in a majority of the schools.

B. Oral Expression

This section was concerned with the existence of and/or the value placed upon opportunities to develop oral skills. Table 2 shows items that are valued and exist to a high degree in the language arts curriculum.

C. Spelling

This section includes items indicating the existence of and/or the value placed upon spelling skills and recognition of the usefulness of good spelling. None of the conditions expressed in these items existed to the degree that it should as evidenced by the concensus. Table 3 shows those items that are valued and exist to a high degree in the language arts curriculum.

The purposefulness of spelling in writing diaries was the only item showing a high degree of value but a low degree of existence in a majority of schools.

D. Listening Skills

The items in this section involved the existence of and/or the value placed upon experiences to develop listening skills and the recognition of listening as important to communication. Table 4 contains those items that are valued and exist to a high degree in the language arts curriculum.

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[1] A majority of responses falling in the two lowest dimensions of the five point scale (1 or 2) indicated a low degree.

TABLE I

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION ITEMS SHOWING HIGH DEGREE OF VALUE AND EXISTENCE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

Item	Frequency of Responses Showing High Degree	
	Value	Existence
1. Many opportunities exist within the classroom to develop a readiness for:		
a. forming letters	12	10
b. writing sentences	13	11
c. writing stories and ideas	12	9
2. Activities are used for developing eye-hand coordination	13	8
3. Children are made aware that oral expression can be represented in written form	11	12
4. The teacher assures that appropriate tools (paper, pencils, etc.) are used in accordance with each child's developmental level	13	13
5. The teaching of manuscript and cursive writing is maintained	13	13
6. Neatness is stressed in all written work	13	12
7. The ability to write names, numbers, and familiar words, without copy is stressed	13	10
8. Opportunity is provided to improve ability in expressing ideas through a growing independence in spelling and sentence structure	13	12
9. The teacher imparts to children that an idea can be expressed in a complete sentence, a paragraph, and a story or a poem	13	12
10. Children are motivated to be creative in:		
a. stories	10	11
b. poems	11	7
11. Punctuation is included in developing language facility	13	11
12. Audio-visual aids are used to stimulate and enrich written communication	12	10

TABLE 2

ORAL EXPRESSION ITEMS SHOWING HIGH DEGREE OF VALUE AND EXISTENCE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

Item	Frequency of Responses Showing High Degree	
	Value	Existence
1. A climate of encouragement exists where children respond by expressing and exchanging ideas, feelings, and needs with peers, older children, and adults.	13	12
2. The accomplishments of work periods are shared and discussed.	13	10
3. Situations are provided for accurate reporting of verbal messages.	11	8
4. Experiences are provided for relating incidents in sequence, such as previously read stories, etc.	13	11
5. Opportunity is given for telling original stories.	12	7
6. Opportunity is given to enlarge speaking vocabulary.	13	12
7. Fluency in speaking is encouraged through the use of connecting words.	11	9
8. Through book reports and reporting of current events oral language is enhanced.	12	7
9. Opportunities are provided for children to participate in:		
a. singing	13	9
b. telling stories	12	9
10. A child's language is accepted.	10	9
11. Children are made aware of acceptable speaking voices for use both indoors and outdoors.	13	11
12. Children are taught to respect the opinion of others expressed orally.	13	10
13. Children are made aware that inter-personal conflicts can be resolved through oral communication.	12	10

TABLE 2--Continued

Item	Frequency of Responses Showing High Degree	
	Value	Existence
14. Out of school experiences are shared and used for a basis of discussion.	11	12
15. Children are encouraged to participate in class discussions.	13	13
16. Emphasis is given to clear speaking and speaking in complete sentences.	13	13

TABLE 3

SPELLING ITEMS SHOWING HIGH DEGREE OF VALUE AND EXISTENCE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

Item	Frequency of Responses Showing High Degree	
	Value	Existence
1. Spelling is purposeful in		
a. stories	13	9
b. all other written communication*	13	9
2. Word analysis techniques are presented in a systematic way, consistent with the development of children.	13	13
3. The importance of spelling words correctly in all written work is emphasized.	13	10
4. Spelling vocabulary is expanded and reflects the:		
a. content area	12	8
b. child's own written expression	12	8
5. The skill of alphabetizing words is developed.	12	12
6. Training is provided in dictionary and dictionary skills, additional skill is in evidence in use of card catalogues and indexes.	12	11
7. Each child is helped to develop spelling skills consistent with their individual needs and commensurate with their ability.	12	10

*Does not include poems, notes, or diaries.

TABLE 4

LISTENING SKILLS ITEMS SHOWING HIGH DEGREE OF VALUE AND EXISTENCE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

Item	Frequency of Responses Showing High Degree	
	Value	Existence
1. Listening is an integral part of the communication process of social development.	13	13
2. Listening is recognized as a thinking process preceding learning.	13	13
3. Varied experiences are provided for developing attentiveness, i.e., literature, sharing, discussion, music, conversation.	13	13
4. The attention span is lengthened as the student progresses in elementary experiences.	13	13
5. The ability to relate events in sequence is developed.	13	11
6. The ability to follow directions through listening is developed.	12*	13
7. Auditory discrimination is developed through:		
a. recognition of emotion through tone and verbal expression	12*	11
b. recognition of environmental sounds	10*	8
c. recognition of relationships between sound and visual letters	12*	13
8. Good manners are developed for listening in order that response might be intelligent and with discrimination.	12*	10
9. The listening component of the language arts should include training of students in listening critically for simple evaluation as a goal.	12	7
10. The opportunity is given to enjoy children's literature and to hear poetry read effectively.	13	12

*Only 12 responses were recorded for these items; all other items received 13 responses.

Section III

Summary and Recommendations

A. Summary

In general, schools participating in the language arts self-evaluation judged themselves to be implementing a large percentage of the items that were valued highly. Table 5 illustrates that in each of the four sections of the instrument over half of the items considered highly desirable are actually existing to a high degree in a majority of the schools. The language arts programs are accomplishing more of the curricular goals in the areas of listening and written communication according to the information in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Percent of Items Valued to High Degree that Exist to High Degree

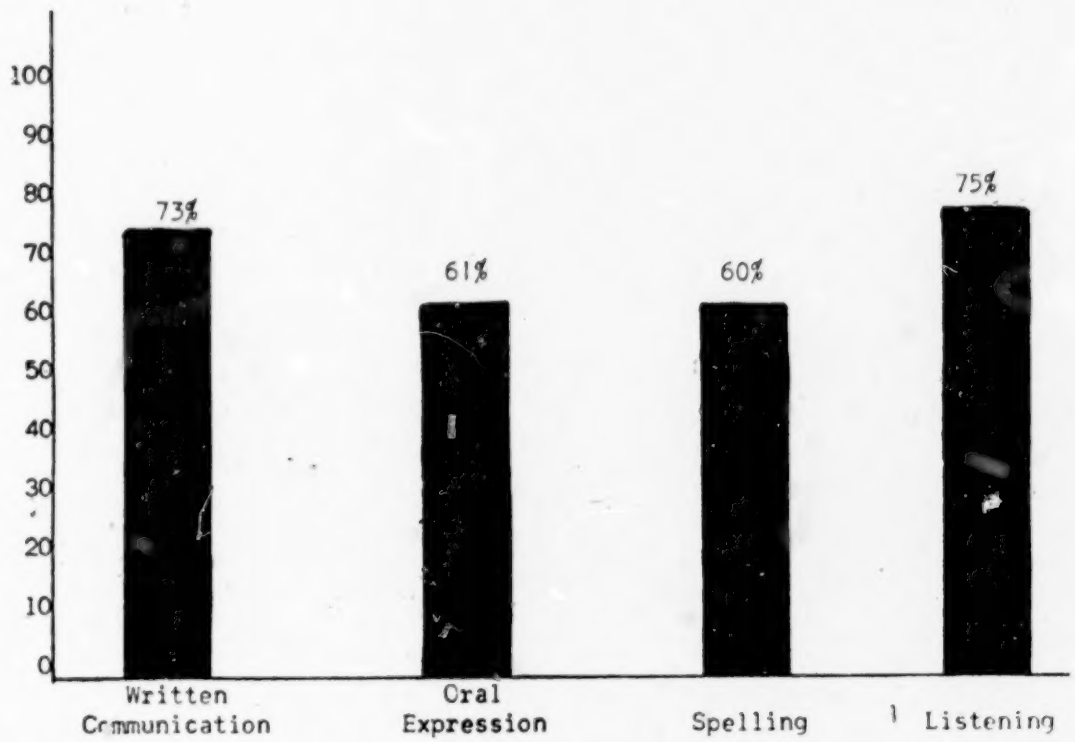
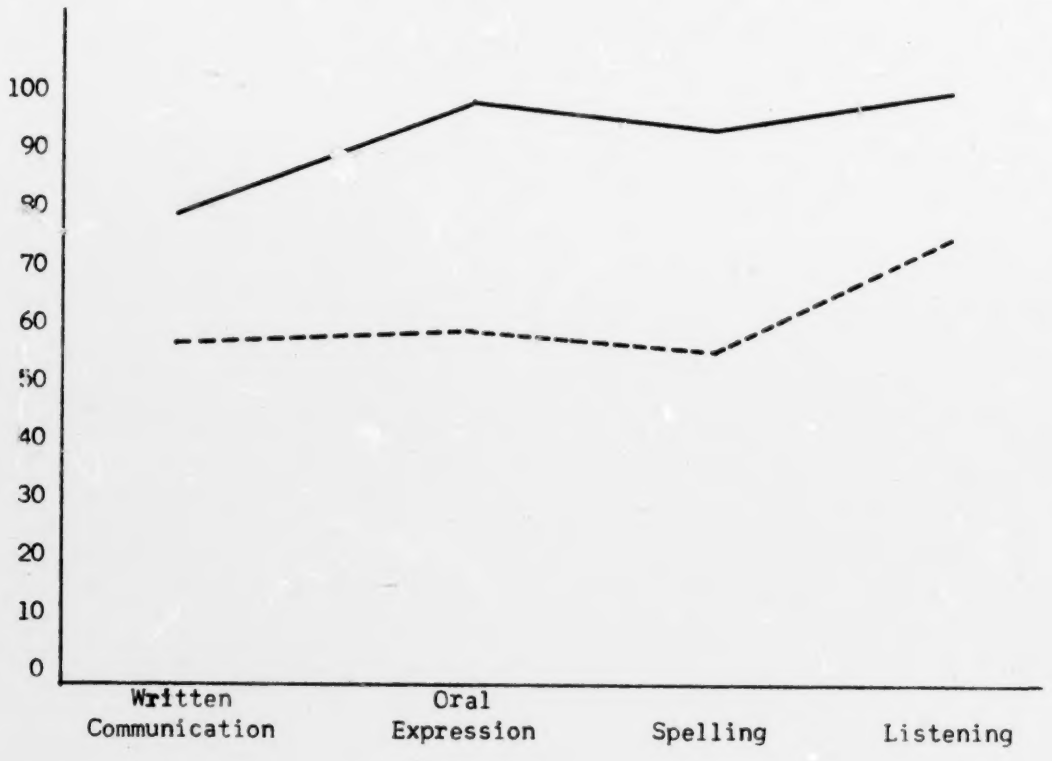


Table 6 shows the relative comparison between the number of items that should exist and that do exist in a majority of the schools. For example, of the total number of items from the written communication section 79% were considered of high value; 57% of the total items from this section actually exist to a high degree. As Table 6 indicates, listening and oral expression emerge as the most highly valued areas in the language arts, 100% and 97%, respectively. Also, listening (75%) and oral expression (59%) are the areas of greatest implementation. As expected, there is more discrepancy between values and existence in those areas judged to be of greater value. The exception is in the area of listening where a majority of the schools are implementing 75% of the items. The changes in the percent of total items valued and implemented across the skill areas follow the same general pattern with those items existing to a high degree showing a little more consistency across written communication, oral expression, and spelling. Again, the exception is in the area of listening where a pronounced increase in percent of total items implemented exists. The trend toward more inconsistency in valued conditions than in existing ones indicates a need for renewed curricular planning and implementation in the areas of language arts. In general, the language arts curriculum areas do not reflect the relative values placed upon them.

TABLE 6

Percent of Total Number of Items Valued
to High Degree Compared to Percent of
Total Number of Items Existing to High Degree



_____ Valued to high degree

- - - - - Existing to high degree

B. Recommendations

1. Local Level

   a. Individual elementary building committees should use their consensus results to identify areas in their own language arts program that need to be implemented or improved.

   b. A final report of the individual school assessment should be disseminated to the school community.

   c. Individual building committees should assess the impact of the self-evaluation during year two of the project.

   d. At least one highly valued activity identified should be implemented in the second project year.

2. System Level

   a. Curriculum and planning personnel should begin to examine curriculum change especially in the areas of oral expression and spelling.

   b. The degree of implementation of valued language arts skills and activities should be examined in terms of student achievement.

   c. The language arts skills and activities should be re-evaluated to determine relationships with existing reading programs.

3. Project Level

   a. The language arts self-evaluation instrument should be revised for use during the second project year.

   b. A revision of the language arts instrument should incorporate items relevant to elementary reading programs as well.

   c. The revised instrument should contain items in the reading/language arts curriculum that allow for finer discriminations between skills within the various instructional areas.

   d. Program organization and methodology should be important considerations to be judged in conjunction with language arts and reading content.

4. State Level

   a. Regional language arts workshops should be implemented to aid teachers in instruction especially in the areas of written communication, spelling, and oral expression.

b. The information obtained from the language arts self-evaluation should be disseminated through regular channels to appropriate audiences.

c. The information obtained from this report should also be disseminated to the Right To Read Program.

d. It is recommended that planning and implementation of activities for assessing educational needs in individual elementary schools receive continued encouragement.